

# USDA/Rural Development

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### VENEMAN ANNOUNCES \$20 MILLION IN BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY GRANTS

WASHINGTON, May 16, 2003 - Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the selection of the first broadband community grants to be awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The grants total \$20 million with over \$8.2 million benefiting 13 Native American and Native Alaskan communities. Through these grants, the communities will be able to participate and take advantage of the high-speed telecommunications tools needed to be a part of the global digital community.

“Expanding the reach of information technology brings to the homes and businesses of America’s most remote rural communities new opportunities for accessing education, health and economic resources,” said Veneman. “Placing the vast knowledge and resources at the fingertips of a great number of Americans will bring anew a world of information and opportunities.”

At the Economic Summit held last year in Waco, Texas, President Bush stated, “In order to make sure the economy grows, we must bring the promise of broadband technology to millions of Americans...And broadband technology is going to be incredibly important for us to stay on the cutting edge of innovation here in America.”

This investment in rural America goes to [40 communities in 17 states \(Link to list\)](#) and supports the Bush Administration’s efforts to enable all sectors of the economy to grow. The 40 applications selected were among the over 300 requests submitted. Communities selected do not have access to broadband connectivity for essential services of police, fire protection, hospitals, libraries and schools. In return for receiving a grant, the communities will provide community residents with computer and Internet access. The grant program supplements USDA Rural Development’s standard high-speed telecommunications loan program.

KDSC, Inc. of Grand Island, Neb. received \$143,948 in broadband grant funds that will be utilized for establishing a wireless Internet infrastructure to include connections for critical facilities. Funds will also be used for minor remodeling of an existing community center, and staffing and supporting of the center. The community’s critical facilities can potentially take advantage of the high-speed access, which will open the door to many resources not currently available to these facilities. This will provide each facility with their individually unique applications for continuous improvement.

"Loup City and the residents of Sherman County will benefit significantly from this community connect broadband project," stated Jim Barr, Nebraska state director for USDA Rural Development. "In an area where most broadband options are not feasible, the broadband funds will provide wireless technology for high speed Internet access to this rural Nebraska area. Services such as these are vital to the well-being and the quality of life of rural Nebraskans."

KDSC, Inc. is a regional Internet Service Provider (ISP) that provides analog and digital 56k dial-up services to many Nebraska communities.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Rural Development is Rural America's Venture Capitalist. Providing equity, liquidity, and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on these and other rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>.

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